



Stage I Fire Restrictions, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests
Frequently Asked Questions & Answers (Q & A)
July 2, 2013

***Note:** *The following questions are only a potential subset of questions regarding Stage 1 Fire Restrictions. If you have other specific questions or need clarification on the following answers, please call or stop by your local ranger district office listed below.*

Medicine Bow National Forest Offices (Wyoming)

Brush Creek-Hayden Ranger District, 2171 Highway 130, Saratoga, WY, (307) 326-5258

Douglas Ranger District, 2250 E. Richards Street, Douglas, WY, (307)358-4690

Laramie Ranger District, 2468 Jackson Street, Laramie, WY, (307)745-2300

Routt National Forest Offices (Colorado)

Hahns Peak-Bears Ears Ranger District, 925 Weiss Drive, Steamboat Springs, CO, (970)870-2299

Parks Ranger District, 100 Main Street, Walden, CO, (970)723-2700

Yampa Ranger District, 300 Roselawn Avenue, Yampa, CO, (970)638-4516

Frequently Asked Q & A

Q: How are fire restrictions decisions made?

A: Local land managers consider several criteria when assessing the need for fire restrictions. These include things such as fuel moisture conditions, weather forecasts, fire activity (local, regional and national), as well as social and economic considerations. Decisions are also typically coordinated with multiple agencies and counties.

Q: Will restrictions be lifted if we receive rain?

A: Although conditions started out much better than last year (2012), we are still dealing with prolonged drought conditions. All vegetation is either already dry or quickly drying out. For larger vegetation/fuels such as logs and mature trees to sufficiently recover from drought, it would take a sustained period of rain or possibly multiple sustained storm events to sufficiently wet soils and large vegetation/fuels.

Q: Under Stage I restrictions, can I have a fire during my upcoming camping trip or picnic?

A: It depends on whether you are using an officially developed recreation site (i.e. a named and signed campground or picnic area with permanent steel fire structures provided by the Forest Service) or enjoying your outing in a dispersed setting (i.e. camping outside of or away from an officially developed, named and signed recreation site).

- *Stage I restrictions do not allow for open fires (including charcoal fires), except within the steel fire pits/ring structures or grills/grates provided by the Forest Service in officially developed (named and signed) campgrounds and picnic areas.*
- *If you will be camping or picnicking at your favorite dispersed site, fires are not allowed.*

Q: Why are there exceptions for pits/rings and grills/grates provided by the Forest Service in officially developed recreation sites?

A: These permanently installed structures are designed to contain open fires.

Additionally, developed recreation areas are generally more protected from fire because these areas are typically clear of fuels that can cause an escaped fire to spread.

Developed recreation areas also have a lot of public and Forest Service personnel present (vs dispersed/remote settings) in the event that a fire escaped a designated fire ring or grate.

Q: If I can't have a fire outside of an officially developed recreation site, what can I use for cooking and heating while dispersed camping?

A1: You can still use portable cook stoves, lanterns and heating devices that use petroleum fuels such as pressurized liquid gas or propane that can be readily controlled by a valve, in the event there was an issue with the flame. These devices are allowed in both developed and dispersed settings.

A2: You can use a fully enclosed portable woodstove (e.g. Shepherd type) as long as it is equipped with a functional 1/4" spark arrester screen.

Q: If I am dispersed camping, can I use a charcoal grill, smoker, or portable fire pit? How about using a rock ring?

A: No, those devices have an open/uncontrolled fuel source and are not allowed when fire restrictions are in effect. When fire restrictions are in effect, only gas/propane cook stoves, lanterns and heaters with on/off controls are ok to use outside of officially developed recreation sites. Rock rings, whether inside or outside of Forest Service developed recreation sites, are not legal.

Q: Can I still shoot firearms on the MBRTB?

A: Yes. Except for the Pole Mountain Unit on the Laramie Ranger District, there are no restrictions on the use of firearms; however, shooters are encouraged to target shoot in areas with good backstops for the safety of others. Please note that explosive targets are not legal. Shooters are also reminded to be prepared to extinguish a fire, in the event that a bullet was to ricochet and ignite a fire.

Q: Can I still cut firewood or complete hazard tree/fuels mitigation work around my cabin?

A: Yes, we understand that this is the season for firewood cutting and completing hazard tree/fuels mitigation work. We only ask that people using chainsaws check to make sure their saw is equipped with a functional, Forest Service-approved spark arrestor. Most spark arrestors that come from the manufacturer are approved.

Q: Can I ride my dirt bike or ATV on trails?

A: Yes, as long as they are legally open roads or trails as shown on the applicable Motor Vehicle Use Map. Also, riders are advised to park their machines in areas that are clear of vegetation or other flammable materials that can be ignited by a hot muffler. The same is true for full-size vehicles.

Q: How much cleared vegetation is necessary to park a vehicle and what's the concern?

A: The concern with parking vehicles is the heat source coming from the engine or more likely the exhaust system. So, the intent is to ensure that heat sources are not near or in contact with fuel sources such as dry grass or brush. To be safe, the public is advised to park in areas where the entire length and width of their vehicle is above bare soil/non vegetated ground.

Q: What is the next stage that could be implemented if conditions worsen?

A: Conditions will be monitored throughout the summer to make future decisions on maintaining or rescinding fire restrictions. Any decision to elevate to Stage 2 restrictions would be made in coordination with other agencies and counties. Stage 2 restrictions would eliminate all open fires (including in officially developed recreation sites) and essentially further restrict activities such as smoking.

Q: If I camp in a Forest Service campground and have a legal fire in the provided steel fire rings, how do I ensure my fire is sufficiently out before I leave?

A: In order to make sure campfires are completely out, campers need to follow these steps:

- *Add water, stir, and repeat until the campfire is cold to the touch.*

These simple steps will help ensure a safer forest for all to enjoy. Penalties for abandoned campfires may include civil or criminal charges and restitution costs.